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Law and Order Committee approves amendment to the Navajo Nation Veteran's Trust Fund

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee considered Legislation No. 0081-14, which seeks to amend the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund to allow for the purchase of prefabricated homes, or modular homes, as well as to allow the homes to be built or placed outside the boundaries of the Navajo Nation.

According to legislation sponsor LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), the proposed amendment would allow Navajo veterans to have additional options regarding the type and location of the home.

“The amendment [to the Veterans Trust Fund] gives our veterans the opportunity to select the type of home they want to fit their needs—either a mobile home or permanent home—and they can choose the location that is closer to utility lines and road access,” said Delegate Yazzie.

LOC member Council Delegate Elmer Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) expressed his concerns regarding the quality of the prefabricated homes.

“Before we look into the modular homes, we need to have a thorough inspection so we know these homes will last a long time and are suitable for life on the reservation and the elements,” said Delegate Begay.

The construction of the homes is funded by a 2-percent set-aside from the Navajo Nation General Fund, which is derived from revenues generated on the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation Council approved the legislation during a special session held on September 9, 2013, which amended the Veterans Trust Fund to authorize the 2-percent set-aside. The funds are then administered to the Navajo Nation Department of Navajo Veteran's Affairs for distribution.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) reminded his fellow LOC members that one of the original intents of the legislation is to provide construction jobs for Navajo veterans.

“In retrospect, [this amendment] goes against one of the original intents of the legislation, which was to provide [construction] jobs to veterans through constructing quality and long-lasting

permanent homes,” said Delegate Shepherd. “We also need to take a holistic approach to cater to the needs of the veterans throughout the entire reservation, not just one area.”

In support of the legislation, LOC member Council Delegate Duane Tsinigine (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K’ai’bii’tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) commended Delegate Yazzie’s efforts to provide additional housing options to Navajo veterans.

“Our veterans that come back to the reservation have no where to live and are in need of housing, especially the retired and disabled individuals. This [legislation] would definitely allow for additional housing and the opportunity to provide more homes in each agency,” said Delegate Tsinigine.

LOC members voted 2-1 to approve Legislation No. 0081-14.

The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee will consider the legislation at its next scheduled meeting on Wednesday, April 16 at 10 a.m. in the North Conference Room of the Council Chamber in Window Rock, Ariz.

The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the legislation.

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